

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The final Office Action dated December 28, 2007, has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

By this Response, claims 1, 3-4, 8, 14-19 and 22-23 are amended, and claim 24 is added. No new matter has been added. Claim 24 contains the subject matter of previously cancelled claimed 2. Claims 20 and 21 have previously been withdrawn per Applicants' provisional election of Group I (claims 1-19 readable thereon) in the Response to Restriction Requirement dated March 7, 2005. Claims 12-13 have been canceled. The amended claim 1 is supported by Fig. 3. No new matter is added. Accordingly, claims 1, 3-11, 14-19 and 22-24 are currently pending in the present application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 3-11 and 22-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claims 1, 3-11 and 14-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,129,804 to Gaynes et al. (hereinafter "Gaynes") in view of Japanese Laid Open Patent Application Publication No. 2001-356353 to Satoshi (hereinafter "Satoshi") and U.S. Patent No. 5,263,888 to Ishihara (hereinafter "Ishihara") and U.S. Patent No. 5,961,777 to Kakinuma (hereinafter "Kakinuma"). Claims 1, 3-11, 14-19 and 22-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0062787 A1 to Hashizume et al. (hereinafter "Hashizume") in view of Ishihara and (optionally) Satoshi. Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gaynes or Hashizume and further in view of Satoshi.

With respect to the rejection of claims 3-11 and 22-23 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite, Applicants submit that the claims, as amended, fully comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

The rejection of claims 1-11, 14-19 and 22-23 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested. Claims 1-11, 14-19 and 22-23 are allowable over the cited references in that each of these claims recite a combination of elements including, for example, “a plurality of hardening stations for hardening a sealant material arranged between the bonded ones of the first and second substrates, wherein the plurality of hardening stations are arranged proximate the fourth side of the at least one unloader and wherein the at least one loader loads the bonded ones of the first and second substrates into the plurality of hardening stations.” None of the cited references including, Gaynes, Ishihara, Hashizume, Kakinuma or Satoshi, singly or in any combination, teach or suggest the feature of the claimed invention.

In rejecting claims 1-4, 14-19 and 22-23, the Examiner acknowledges that Gaynes, Ishihara, Hashizume and Satoshi do not disclose a plurality of hardening stations, and relies on Kakinuma’s disclosure of “hardening structure (which cohabit with the press bonding structures)” to cure the deficiency in the teaching of Gaynes, Ishihara, Hashizume and Satoshi. See Office Action pages 5 and 8. But, Kakinuma fails to teach or suggest the plurality of hardening stations.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the conclusion that the teaching of Kakinuma cures the deficiency in Gaynes, Ishihara, Hashizume and Satoshi. Applicants submit that Kakinuma does not teach or suggest “a plurality of hardening stations for hardening a sealant material arranged between the bonded ones of the first and second substrates, wherein the plurality of hardening stations are arranged proximate the fourth side of the at least one unloader and

wherein the at least one loader loads the bonded ones of the first and second substrates into the plurality of hardening stations” as recited in claim 1.

Also, independent claim 1 recites a combination of elements including, for example, “wherein the at least one substrate bonding station includes upper and lower chamber units each has a flat surface facing each other, and the sealing member is provided on the flat surface of the at least one of the upper and lower chamber units.” None of the cited references including, Gaynes, Ishihara, Hashizume, Kakinuma or Satoshi, singly or in any combination, teach or suggest the feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 1-11, 14-19 and 22-23 are allowable over the cited references.

Applicants believe the foregoing amendments and remarks place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

Application No.: 10/661,473
Amdt. dated March 28, 2008
Reply to Office Action dated December 28, 2008

Docket No.: 8733.872.00

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. §1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911.

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Respectfully submitted,

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